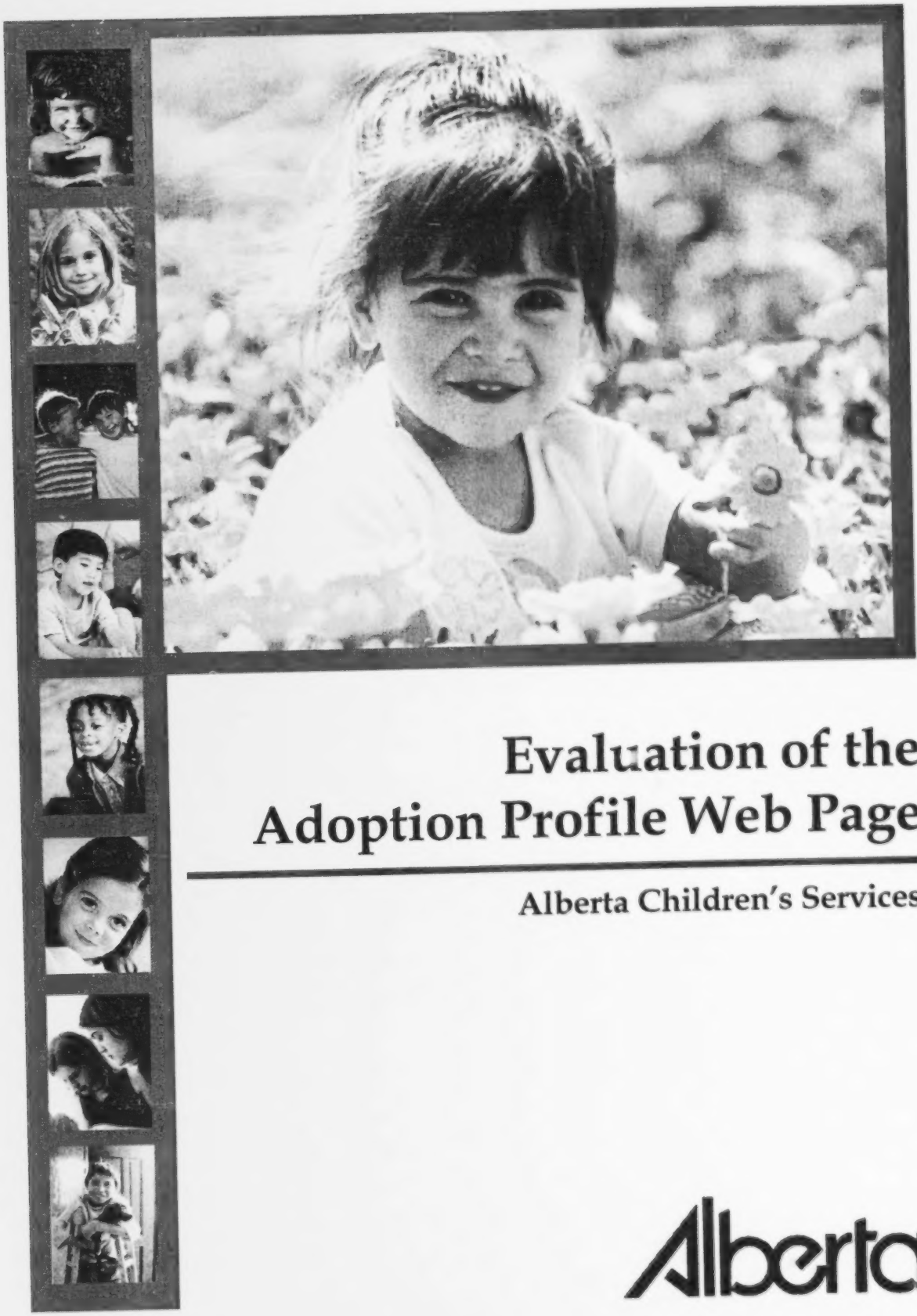

Evaluation of the Adoption Profile Web Page

Alberta Children's Services

Alberta

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Executive Summary

The Alberta Ministry of Children's Services launched an Adoption Web Page on February 10, 2003 to increase the number of adoptions of children in permanent government care, to recruit adoptive homes for special needs children and to raise awareness of the adoption program in Alberta.

In January of 2004, Children's Services initiated an in-depth evaluation of the Adoption Web Page. The Child Welfare Branch – Service Quality Division completed the evaluation. The purposes of the Adoption Profile Web Page evaluation were to:

- Describe the need and supporting rationale for the Web Page.
- Describe the processes employed by Children's Services to develop and maintain the Web Page, particularly with respect to the protection of the privacy of children.
- Profile the children featured on, and the adoptive parents recruited through, the Web Page.
- Identify, through a comparative analysis of similar websites currently being utilized by other mandated organizations and legislative jurisdictions:
    - Best practices for web pages profiling children eligible for adoption; and
    - Options for the future development of the Web Page.
- Determine the extent to which the goals of the Web Page were met and analyse the impacts of the Web Page.
- Draw conclusions and present recommendations for improving the Web Page.

Evaluation methods included a review of the relevant literature on the photo-profiling of children over the Internet, a comparative analysis of similar web pages developed by major Canadian and American jurisdictions and organizations, a review of administrative program data for the 12-month periods before and after the launch of the Web Page, as well as 57 interviews with departmental and regional staff, adoption experts, adoptive parents, children profiled on the Web Page and the Government's Information and Privacy Commissioner. The primary constraints placed upon the evaluation pertained to time, resources, and limitations imposed by the Computer Information System in generating pertinent reports.

The results of the evaluation should be viewed as preliminary. Because of the nature of the adoptions process, the long-term outcomes and impact of the Adoption Web Page initiative will not be apparent for several years. Adoption approval of prospective families and the matching and placement of children require a minimum time frame of six to eight months. Adoption finalization takes approximately 12 months. The evaluation will serve to provide the Ministry with a critical baseline against which to evaluate the Web Page in the future as well as a significant amount of information that can be used to improve the performance of the Web Page over the short term.

The primary audiences for this evaluation are the Ministry of Children's Services, Adoption Services, Child and Family Services Authorities, adoption caseworkers, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Office, stakeholders and the general public.

The major conclusions of the evaluation are that:

- The Adoption Web Page generates significant public interest in the children profiled and in Alberta's adoption program,
- Adoptive parents generally have positive opinions of the Web Page,
- Experts in the field of adoption view internet photo-listing as an effective parent recruitment strategy,
- Departmental and regional staff strongly attest to the dramatic and positive impacts that the Web Page has had on the Ministry's adoption process,
- The Information and Privacy Commissioner does not have any concerns about the current content of the Web Page and
- Children have positive opinions about being profiled on the Web Page.

The evaluation confirms that the major goals of the Web Page have been achieved. Since the launch, there has been a 30% increase in the number of adoptions of children in government care, there has been a 63% increase in applications from prospective adoptive parents and the profile of Alberta's adoption program has been raised significantly. The Adoption Web Page has proven to be a powerful mechanism for both disseminating the message that large numbers of children are in need of permanent homes and for recruiting adoptive parents.

The major recommendations of this evaluation are that the Ministry provide approved adoptive parents with more detailed information regarding the special needs of the children, that the Web Page indicate when children are in a matched status, that the search function of the Web Page be expanded to allow users to be more specific in their search parameters, that a glossary of terms and acronyms be included, that children participate in the development of their profiles, and that the Web Page continue to be evaluated on a periodic basis to ensure optimal performance.

Program Description

The subject of this evaluation is the Adoption Web Page, a mechanism designed to recruit adoptive parents through the Internet. This section contains a description of the Web Page and presents some general information that supports the context for the evaluation.

The Adoption Program

Many children are in the permanent care of Alberta Children's Services because their parents or guardians are unable to care for them. The most desirable permanency plan for these children often involves a placement with an adoptive family. The Ministry's adoption program establishes relationships between children and adoptive parents, and helps to provide long-term security and stability for children in care. Formal adoption processes legally sever ties between children and their birth parents, and enable adoptive parents to become legally responsible for their children.

The majority of children in permanent government care are age seven or older and have special needs that may include significant medical, physical, mental or emotional problems or a history that could impede their development. Because of the difficulty associated with finding adoptive families for many of these children, the Ministry has employed a variety of media recruitment mechanisms to reach prospective adoptive families. These tools have included the Wednesday's Child television segments, radio messages, public service announcements, newsletters, and newspaper advertisements. The use of the Internet through the Adoption Web Page represents the Ministry's newest approach to recruiting adoptive families through the media.

The Adoption Web Page

Alberta Children's Services launched the Adoption Profile Web Page on February 10, 2003 as an extension of the Ministry's pre-existing media recruitment strategy. The Web Page, which is accessible to the public through the main Adoption Services Web Page, enables parents who are interested in adopting children to view video clips, photographs and profiles of children eligible for adoption. Because access to view the Web Page is unrestricted, the profiles are designed to balance the protection of the privacy of children with the provision of information about needs and presenting issues.

Development

In the fall of 2002, the Ministry assembled a 14-member project team – which included staff from the Adoption Services Program, a graphics and editorial team from the Communications Branch, and a group of technical experts from IBM – to create the Web Page. The IBM representatives were responsible for design and development; the Communications group provided strategic communications counsel, technical support, and the graphic design for the Web Page; and Adoption Services staff contributed child profiles, general content, and served as a liaison with the Ministry's Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs). The Web Page was developed, tested and launched over a five-month period between October of 2002 and February of 2003. Strategic elements of the Web Page project were formulated in consultation with the Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs). Specific strategies for adhering to the short time lines and managing the content of the Web Page were developed through the review and incorporation of the procedures used to maintain the Ministry's existing websites and information systems.

Target Population and Stakeholders

The target populations for the Adoption Web Page are the members of the general public who are potential adoptive parents and children in the permanent care of the Ministry.

The internal stakeholders are the staff of the CFSAs and the Ministry – particularly those working in the field of adoption. Other internal stakeholders include the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Coordinator (FOIP) and the Information and Privacy Commissioner. External stakeholders are members of the public – especially adoptive parents and children in permanent care. The most obvious beneficiaries of the Web Page are the children in care, many of whom may obtain new opportunities to find permanent homes as a result of this initiative.

Internet Access

The viability of the Adoption Web Page is supported by the high rate of Internet access among Albertans. According to the results of a 2003 survey on Internet access and use completed on behalf of the Ministry of Innovation and Science:

- 80% of Albertans currently have access to the Internet from home, work, school, libraries or other environments;
- 83% of Albertans residing in urban areas and 74% of rural residents have Internet access; and
- 63% of Albertans earning less than $20,000 per year and 78% of residents earning more than $60,000 are able to access the Internet.

Goals

The goals of the Web Page, which is the only website of its kind in Canada, are:

- To increase the number of adoptions of children in permanent government care;
- To recruit adoptive homes for special needs or 'hard-to-place' children; and
- To increase public awareness with respect to the need for adoption of children in government care.

Implementation Processes

The implementation processes, or major activities, undertaken by the Ministry in order to achieve the goals of the Web Page consist of the following:

1) The CFSAs and Adoption Services identify children in permanent government care who would benefit from media recruitment.
2) The CFSAs obtain consent for the profile to appear on the Adoption Web Page. Consent must be provided by children who are 12 years of age or older. Caseworkers explain the implications of media exposure to the children, including those who are under the age of 12 but are able to understand.
3) Adoption Services submits the profile to the Ministry's Quality Assurance Branch for internal review and approval.
4) Adoption Services submits the profile to the Freedom Of Information and Privacy (FOIP) Office for external review and approval.
5) The CFSAs and Adoption Services conduct the final process 'checks' and analysis of the profile.
6) Adoption Services adds the profile to the Web Page.

Outcomes

The major activities, which culminate in the addition of child-specific profiles to the Web Page, are designed to support the three overall goals of the initiative. In consultation with Ministry staff, the evaluators translated the goals into several immediate, intermediate and long-term outcomes for the Web Page. These outcomes are presented in the following table:

Immediate Outcomes	• The public is aware of the Adoption Program, the Web Page, and the need for adoptive parents. • The public is interested in the Adoption Program and the children profiled on the Web Page. • Adoptive parents are satisfied with, and informed by, the content of the Web Page.
Intermediate Outcomes	• Adoptive parents recruited through the Web Page apply to adopt children in care. • CFSA staff approve adoptive parents recruited through the Web Page. • Adoption Services and CFSA staff match adoptive parents recruited through the Web Page with children eligible for adoption. • CFSA staff match and place children profiled on the Web Page with adoptive parents.
Long-term Outcomes	• CFSA staff finalizes adoptions involving ➢ Adoptive parents recruited through the Web Page ➢ Children profiled on the Web Page ➢ Children in permanent care • CFSA staff uses adoption as a permanency planning option for children in permanent care • Children eligible for adoption spend less time in permanent care

The "theory of change" associated with the Web Page involves the translation of the knowledge acquired by adoptive parents to a set of desired behaviours and, ultimately, to a new condition or circumstance for parents, families and children in care. At the immediate level, outcomes derived from the Web Page evolve around increased public awareness of – and interest in – the children profiled and the adoption process in general. Intermediate outcomes include the conversion of prospective adoptive parents to parents in a "view to adopt" (VTA) status and the placement of children profiled on the Web Page. In the longer term, the Web Page is expected to result in increases in the numbers of finalized placements involving parents recruited through the Web Page and children profiled on the Web Page, the overall numbers of adoptions involving children in permanent care, the use of adoption as a permanency planning option, as well as a decrease in the average length of time that children spend in the care of the Ministry.

It is important to note two additional points about the outcomes identified for the Web Page:

- First, an important set of outcomes relates to the recruitment of parents who adopt children in the care of the Ministry – whether they are profiled on the Web Page or not.
- Second, while the Web Page initiative is expected to have a primary effect on the children profiled, longer-term secondary effects are anticipated for all children in permanent care.

The Logic Model in Appendix A depicts the major components of the Adoption Web Page in greater detail – including the linkages between major processes and intended outcomes.

Evaluation Description

Background

In May of 2003, the Ministry of Children's Services completed a three-month review of the Adoption Web Page. The three-month review described the background and development of the Web Page, assessed the value of the Web Page as a recruitment tool for adoptive families, and reported some preliminary impact information. The three-month review also recommended that the Ministry initiate a more extensive evaluation of the Web Page one year after implementation. In response to this recommendation, the Ministry identified the current evaluation of the Web Page as an operational priority for 2003-2004.

The sponsors and primary users of the evaluation are the staff of the Ministry's Adoption Services program. Internal resources were used to complete the evaluation, as staff from the Standards and Practices Unit of the Child Welfare Branch carried out all research activities associated with the project between November of 2003 and April of 2004.

Purpose

The purposes of the Adoption Profile Web Page evaluation are to:

- Describe the need and supporting rationale for the Web Page.
- Describe the processes employed by Children's Services to develop and maintain the Web Page, particularly with respect to the protection of the privacy of children.
- Profile the children featured on, and the adoptive parents recruited through, the Web Page.
- Identify, through a comparative analysis of similar websites currently being utilized by other mandated organizations and legislative jurisdictions:
    - Best practices for web pages profiling children eligible for adoption; and
    - Options for the future development of the Web Page.
- Determine the extent to which the goals of the Web Page were met and analyze the impacts of the Web Page.
- Draw conclusions and present recommendations for improving the Web Page.

Focus and Scope

The primary foci of the evaluation were the *effectiveness* and *impact* of the Web Page. In this context, effectiveness referred to the extent to which the goals and outcomes of the Web Page were achieved. In addition to the achievement of goals and outcomes, key dimensions of effectiveness included the opinions and perspectives of adoptive parents and the perceptions of profiled children. The evaluation also assessed the preliminary impact – meaning the intended and unintended consequences – that the Web Page has had upon the Ministry's Adoption Program and adoptions in general across the province.

Secondary foci of the evaluation were the rationale, design, and delivery of the Web Page. The rationale contributes to the context for the evaluation, and refers to the manner in which the Ministry established the need and conceptual impetus for the Web Page. The design and delivery components included analyses of the degree to which the Web Page reflects current best practice and balances the need to protect the privacy of children with the need to provide adoptive parents with relevant information.

Despite the focus on the effectiveness and impact of the Web Page, the results of the evaluation should be viewed as preliminary and formative. Partly because of the nature of

the adoption process, the full long-term effect and impact of the Web Page initiative is not reflected in the results of this evaluation and likely will not be fully apparent for several years. Still, the current evaluation will serve to provide the Ministry with a critical baseline against which to evaluate the Web Page in the future, as well as a significant amount of information that can be used to improve the performance of the Web Page over the short term.

Research Questions

The primary and secondary foci of the evaluation were translated into fourteen research questions in five domains of inquiry (the rationale, design, service delivery context, effectiveness, and impact of the Web Page). The table below lists the questions, by domain.

Domain	Questions
❖ Rationale	• How was the need for the Web Page identified? • How does the Internet help to recruit parents that are suitable for the children profiled?
❖ Design	• How does the Web Page compare with the pages utilized by other mandated organizations and legislative jurisdictions? • To what extent does the design of the Web Page reflect 'best practices'?
❖ Service Delivery Context	• What are the characteristics, presenting issues and needs of the children profiled on the Web Page? • What are the characteristics of the parents recruited through the Web Page? How are these parents different from parents recruited through other mechanisms? • How does the Ministry maintain the Web Page and protect the privacy of children?
❖ Effectiveness	• To what extent have the goals and outcomes of the Web Page been achieved? • How satisfied are parents with the Web Page? • How do children feel about being profiled on the Web Page? • How can the effectiveness of the Web Page be improved?
❖ Impact	• What impact does the web page have on the Ministry's adoption process and adoptions across the Province? • What are the unintended/unanticipated impacts of the Web Page?

Evaluation Methods

The evaluation plan and framework in Appendix B of this document outlines the methodologies employed during the evaluation of the Adoption Profile Page. Additional detail on these methods is presented below.

Data Collection

The evaluators employed five data collection methods to gather primary and secondary data from a total of eleven different data sources between December of 2003 and April of 2004. The data collection methods are summarized below.

- Background Document Review. The evaluators obtained background documentation on the Web Page from Adoption Services. These materials

contained detailed information pertaining to the need for, and the conceptualization of, the Web Page and contributed to the discussion of the rationale underlying the creation of the Web Page.

- Literature Review. The evaluation included a review of the relevant literature pertaining to child-specific profiling as a means of increasing the number of adoptions for high needs children. The literature review provided insights into the profiling process, based upon the experiences of other jurisdictions and mandated organizations, and identified best practices as well as alternative approaches to achieving the goals of the Web Page.
- Web Page Review. Some American and international jurisdictions and organizations have been using the Internet to profile children eligible for adoption for several years. The evaluation included a comparative analysis of the key features of a sample of these sites as a means of establishing best practices and identifying potential areas of design improvement for Alberta's Web Page.
- Administrative Data Review. Quantitative and qualitative administrative data obtained from Adoption Services, the Alberta Children's Services Webmaster, and Child Welfare Information System (CWIS) facilitated the development of a descriptive profile of the children profiled and the parents recruited through the Web Page from the launch date through February of 2004. The Administrative Data Review also provided information on the achievement of the goals and the immediate, intermediate and long-term outcomes of the Web Page through pre-post launch trend analyses.
- Surveys. The evaluators surveyed five sets of respondents on the Ministry's Web Page. A total of 57 interviews were completed for this evaluation. The table below summarizes the number of interviews completed for each group of respondents and the survey methods utilized.

Respondents	Number	Survey Type
Adoption Services Staff	4	In-person Interviews
CFSA Staff	9	Telephone Interviews
Adoption Experts	8	Telephone Interviews
Adoptive Parents	23	Telephone Interviews
Profiled Children	12	In-person Interviews
Privacy Commissioner	1	Telephone Interview
Total	57	

The interviews with Adoption Services and CFSA Staff addressed several issues, including the need and supporting rationale for the development of the Web Page, the maintenance of the Web Page and how the privacy of the children profiled is protected, the salient characteristics of the children profiled and the parents recruited through the Web Page, and the extent to which the Web Page is effective at achieving its goals and outcomes. The interviews with subject experts addressed questions pertaining to the rationale for the photo-profiling concept, the extent to which the Ministry's Web Page reflected best practices, and potential areas for improvement. Parent interviews yielded satisfaction information from the perspective of Web Page users. The interviews with children explored their perceptions of the photo-profiling concept and how they feel (or felt) about having their profiles posted on the Internet. In addition to these interviews, the evaluation obtained the views of Alberta's Information and Privacy Commissioner on the Ministry's management of the child-specific information on the Web Page.

Design

All data collection activities employed during the evaluation involved a "single measurement" design with the exception of the administrative data review, which sought to demonstrate impact by comparing several variables "before-and-after" the advent of the Web Page.

The primary weakness of the evaluation was the comparatively low reliability of the research design. Because the design did not involve random assignment to experimental and control groups, multiple measurements of manipulated variables as a means of establishing causal relationships between the Web Page and the goals and anticipated outcomes or statistically significant sample sizes, the evaluators could not draw conclusions that permitted confident attributions or generalizations. Therefore, the results reported in Section 3 imply – but do not demonstrate – the effectiveness and impact of the Adoption Web Page, and therefore should be interpreted with caution.

Instrumentation

The evaluators developed non-standardized survey instruments for the primary data collection process in consultation with the staff of Adoption Services (see Appendix C). The interview instrument inventories for the interviews with Adoption Services and CFSA staff, adoption experts, profiled children, and the Information and Privacy Commissioner consisted of unstructured/open-ended items. These instruments were designed to gather qualitative data. The inventory of the instrument used for the parent interviews was mixed and featured structured/closed-ended, structured-contingency and unstructured/open-ended items. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected.

Except for the Government's Information and Privacy Commissioner, who agreed to speak for the record, there were no identifiers anywhere on the instruments, so the anonymity of all respondents was assured. Internal analyses, the results of the survey and the feedback obtained from respondents did not indicate that there were any significant issues pertaining to question clarity or comprehension, time requirements, survey length or the method chosen to collect information. The face and content validity of each survey instrument was determined through an internal review process.

Sampling

Sampling procedures were not required for the interviews with Adoption Services and CFSA staff and the Information and Privacy Commissioner. The evaluators, in consultation with the staff of Adoption Services, selected experts with local, national and international expertise in the field of adoption and specialized knowledge of the concept of child-specific profiling to participate in the evaluation.

Sampling was necessary for the interviews with adoptive parents and children. The sampling frame for the interviews with parents consisted of parents who were approved for adoption in the twelve months before and the twelve months after the launch of the Adoption Web Page. A stratified random strategy was employed in an attempt to ensure representation by region of residence and adoptive status. Strata for adoptive status included parents in View To Adopt status, parents matched with adoptive children, and parents with home assessments complete. Regions that had less than three parents in the overall population of these three strata were eliminated from the sample. Foster parents were excluded from the valid sample of the VTA strata. Parents who had not viewed the Web Page were excluded from all strata. The table below summarizes the sampling strategy employed for the adoptive parent group.

Region #	Population	Valid Sample	Sample	Responses	Response Rate
Parents in View To Adopt Status					
1	5	0	0	0	-
3	22	5	5	5	100%
4	4	0	0	0	-
6	23	5	5	4	80%
7	6	0	0	0	-
Parents Matched with Adoptive Children					
3	10	8	2	2	100%
4	5	4	1	1	100%
5	3	2	1	1	100%
6	13	10	2	2	100%
7	3	2	1	1	100%
Parents with Home Assessment Complete					
3	23	17	2	2	100%
6	9	7	2	2	100%
7	3	2	1	1	100%
8	3	2	1	1	100%
Totals	132	64	23	22	96%

The evaluators also employed a stratified random sample for the survey of children. The population consisted of all children referred from regions 3 and 6 aged 7 and older who were profiled on the Web Page between February of 2003 and February of 2004. Only children deemed by CFSA staff as appropriate for face-to-face interviews were included in the valid sample. The table below summarizes the sampling strategy for the profiled children.

Age	Population	Valid Sample	Sample	Responses	Response Rate
Region 6					
12 and Over	7	2	2	0	0
9-11	12	6	4	2	50%
7-8	7	2	2	1	50%
Region 3					
12 and Over	2	1	1	1	100%
9-11	11	9	4	4	100%
7-8	9	4	4	4	100%
Totals	48	24	17	12	71%

Ninety-six percent of the adoptive parents contacted agreed to participate in the survey. The response rate for the survey of profiled children was 71%. All interviews were completed between February and April of 2004.

Data Analysis

For quantitative data obtained through the administrative review and the surveys, the analysis procedures employed were descriptive and consisted of frequency and percentage distribution summaries. The evaluators utilized response content analysis to analyze qualitative responses to open-ended survey questions.

Limitations

Time and resource constraints were relevant in relation to the interviews involving children profiled on the Ministry's Web Page. Because these interviews needed to be conducted in-person, extensive travel would have been required to assess the feelings of a statistically significant number of children sampled from the provincial population. Similarly, the optimal research method for assessing public awareness of the Ministry's Adoption Program and the need for adoptive parents – a survey involving a random sample of the general population – was deemed not feasible.

In a few instances, the data required to report on the indicators for some of the outcomes was unavailable (not tracked through Adoption Services records or CWIS). This prevented the evaluators from analyzing some aspects of the effectiveness of the Web Page.

Despite these limitations, the diversity of data collection methods and data sources has provided a basis for a thorough assessment of the Web Page.

Evaluation Results and Discussion

The results of the evaluation are presented in this section according to the five major domains of inquiry: the rationale, design, service delivery, effectiveness, and impact of the Web Page.

1. Rationale for the Web Page

The evaluation explored the supporting rationale for the Web Page through two research questions:

1) *How was the need for the Web Page identified?*

2) *How does the Internet help to recruit parents that are suitable for the children profiled?*

The data sources used to obtain information on the rationale for the Web Page included interviews with Adoption Services and CFSA staff, adoption experts, and background documentation on the Web Page as provided by Adoption Services.

Need

According to Adoption Services and CFSA staff, the advent of the Adoption Web Page was driven largely by the need to increase the profile of adoption as a permanency planning option for children in care. Program documentation indicated that there were 4,858 children in the care of the Ministry when the Web Page was launched in February of 2003. Of these children, approximately 300 (6%) had an identified permanency plan of adoption. The need for increasing the proportion of permanency plans involving adoption was cited in the Ministry's 2002-2005 Business Plan, where an increased emphasis on media recruitment as a means finding more permanent homes for children in care was identified as a priority for the Adoption Program.

Two sources contributed to the conceptualization of the Web Page. First, two recent research projects – a comprehensive client survey, and an in-depth evaluation of the Adoption Program – conducted on behalf of the Ministry by two independent consulting firms revealed that adoptive families want easier access to information about children available for adoption. Second, the Minister of Children Services, the Honourable Iris Evans, requested that the Ministry explore the concept of using the Internet as a vehicle to recruit adoptive parents following a review of the Texas Adoption Exchange – one of approximately fifty websites in the United States used for this purpose.

Over twenty years of experience with the Wednesday's Child television program provided the Adoption Program with strong indication that adoptive parents respond to child-specific recruitment methods. In September 2002, the Program added the video clips features of the Wednesday's Child television segments and descriptive profiles to the main Adoption Services Web Page. The Program reported an immediate and positive response to these profiles from adoptive parents. Program staff therefore regarded the use of the Internet as a "natural extension" of the television segments.

Research into the concept of using the Internet as a means of child-specific recruitment and the consideration of the experiences of several American jurisdictions and organizations that have operated Internet-based "photo-profile" pages for several years provided additional impetus to the concept. The Adoption Council of Canada, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, the North American Council on Adoptable Children and the Evan B. Donaldson Institute (which promotes ethical practice in the field of adoption) are examples of national and international organizations that endorse the photo-profiling of children and attest to the power of the Internet as a recruitment mechanism.

In summary, the need to increase the number of permanency plans involving adoption, the Ministry's awareness of and interest in utilizing the Internet to recruit parents, the experiences of the Adoption Program, and national and international organizations with child-specific photo-profiling contributed to the conceptualization of the Web Page.

Parent Recruitment

The evaluation surveyed CFSA staff, Adoption Services staff, and adoption experts on several aspects of the Adoption Web Page, including the theory underlying Internet photo-profiling. When asked about how the use of the Internet contributes to parent recruitment, a large proportion of respondents – both Ministry staff and experts – indicated that web pages like the one developed by Alberta Children's Services effectively create public awareness and highlight the demand for adoptive parents. One expert interviewee summarized this perspective as follows:

> **"[The Internet] makes the children who are in need of families visible to the community when otherwise they're hidden. By making children visible, whatever means you use, it makes the public aware that there are kids that need families."**

According to the adoption experts surveyed, child-specific recruitment techniques also serve an educative function by informing members of the public of the general needs and demographic characteristics of children available for adoption and de-mystifying the nature of many of the issues presented by the children. The responses of Ministry staff confirmed that the profiles enable viewers to develop basic understandings of the range of special needs that characterize many of the available children and of the skills and capacities required of adoptive parents.

Ministry staff and experts attested to the power of visual mediums, like television and the Internet, in fostering interest in individual children among prospective parents. Several experts noted that these mediums have the capacity to make the children very "real" to viewers in ways that are not possible when purely descriptive mechanisms are employed. A related response theme addressed the "reach" and flexibility of the Internet. Some respondents mentioned that web pages can be accessed by adoptive parents anywhere in the world at any time. Meanwhile, relatively small audiences access other more traditional methods of child-specific recruitment during narrow, pre-determined time periods. One expert pointed out that even the successful Wednesday's Child television segments reach comparatively narrow audiences that are tuned to designated programs at certain times.

While interviewees generally regarded the Internet as an effective mechanism for parent recruitment, adoption experts also commented on some of the potential disadvantages of using this medium for this purpose. Most experts cited the perception, held by some groups and individuals, that placing photo-profiles on adoption websites amounts to the unethical "marketing" of children. Some also pointed out that the long-term impacts of using the Internet as means of profiling adoptive children have not been subjected to research and are therefore unknown - particularly with respect to the emotional

ramifications of mass exposure. However, the clear consensus among expert respondents was that few if any disadvantages can be attributed to Internet photo-profiling and that such websites represent a viable approach to recruitment – providing that they are developed and managed in a sensitive, respectful and appropriate manner. One interviewee summarized the prevailing opinion expressed by the experts with the following comment:

> **"I think the risk of children being left to age out of foster care, age out of the system, is greater than the risk of exposing their picture or their profile on the Internet or other places."**

2. Design of the Web Page

The following research questions were used as the basis for assessing the design of the Web Page:

1) *How does the Web Page compare with the pages utilized by other mandated organizations and legislative jurisdictions?*

2) *To what extent does the design of the Web Page reflect 'best practices'?*

Data sources employed to assess design included reviews of similar web pages used by some American and international jurisdictions, the relevant literature and as well as interviews with adoption experts.

Comparison of Websites

The evaluation process included a comparative analysis of the websites developed by eight American and Canadian adoption organizations. These websites included *Canada's Waiting Kids* (the only national Canadian photo-profile site), the *Adoption Photo-listing* of Ohio, *Adopt US Kids*, *Adopt America Network*, the *Northwest Adoption Exchange*, New York State's *Adoption Album*, the *Adoption Center of Delaware Valley* (for the states of Delaware, New Jersey and Pennsylvania), and the *Texas Adoption Resource Exchange*. Comparisons were based upon the broad categories of content and key design features.

The overall content of Alberta's Web Page was very similar to the other websites included in the comparison. All of the sites reviewed feature information on adoption (or contain links to adoption information) in addition to photo-profiles of children. The amount of information varies by site, but topics covered include information on different types of adoption, stages in the adoption process, demographics of the children profiled and placed, resources on special needs and the demands associated with parenting special needs children, criteria on who can apply for adoption and adoption subsidies, local adoption agencies, and the availability of post-adoption supports and services. In addition, most of the pages referred to the kinds of families that would form the best matches for specific children and mentioned the skills and capacities required by adoptive parents.

Alberta's Web Page differed from other major websites with respect to the nature of child-specific content in several ways. First, the Alberta Web Page contained significantly less medical or diagnostic information. Second, the narrative information accompanying the photos of children on the Adoption Web Page avoids the use of descriptors that may be construed as "negative" (half of the web pages reviewed employed negative terminology to describe individual children, using terms such as aggressive, moody, immature, or jealous). Third, while most of the other pages contain longer, more detailed profiles, the content of the profiles on the Alberta Page tends to be more uniform and consistent. Finally, nearly all of the other websites contained the child's birth month and year, and two included the child's exact birth date (most of the sites containing birth information include it in the introductory list of children).

The evaluation identified password protection, search capacity, and the use of videos as the three most salient aspects of design, and compared Alberta's Web Page with the other sites on these features. Like Alberta's Web Page, all of the other websites, with the exception of Canada's Waiting Kids, did not use a password system to protect access to profiles or information. Five of the eight websites reviewed were similar to the Alberta Web Page in that they contained search functions that enabled viewers to select parameters from checklists or drop lists and retrieve matching profiles. However, the search parameters offered on these five sites included a larger number and range of search options.

The search options on the Alberta Web Page allow for selection based upon gender, age, single children, sibling groups, or children featured on Wednesday's Child whereas the reviewed sites also accommodated searches on the basis of child race. Three of the sites also allowed for limitations to be placed on the level or severity of physical, mental, emotional, and learning disability and two sites permitted searching on the basis of sibling group size. One of the most noteworthy findings of the comparative analysis related to the use of video clips in child profiles. Alberta's Web Page included video clips in some profiles. The only other website reviewed for this report that possessed this feature was that of the *Texas Adoption Resource Exchange*.

Reflection of "Best Practices"

In order to obtain expert opinions on the relative strength of the Alberta Web Page, the evaluators asked the adoption experts surveyed to review and comment on the Web Page. In response, the experts most frequently identified the overall comprehensiveness and the links to adoption information sources, the navigability, and the general layout and appearance as noteworthy strengths. Several respondents commented on the attractiveness and quality of the pictures and acknowledged the use of video as a unique and progressive feature.

When asked to comment on the weaknesses of the Adoption Web Page, the responses of experts revealed a strong consensus around the perceived insufficiency of information emerged. Specifically, there was common sentiment that many of the descriptions on the Web Page either "glossed over" presenting issues – or required viewers to "read between the lines" particularly with respect to educational and special needs.

Although the relevant literature contains very little best practice information that can be used to guide the development and maintenance of adoption websites, the Children's Welfare League of America commissioned a recent review of a sample of web pages containing photo-profiles of children eligible for adoption (see Gerstenzang & Freundlich, 2003). The authors of the review recommended that such websites include:

- Explanations of the term "special needs" and descriptions of how it applies to profiled children,
- The general qualifications or eligibility criteria that apply to adoptive parents,
- Information on the availability of adoption subsidies and tax credits for special needs adoption,
- Descriptions of the foster care and adoption processes,
- Description of the processes involving the adoption of children from other geographic areas.

Alberta's Web Page possessed all of these features and several other information sources, including contact information for private adoption agencies, statistical data, application forms, and an "FAQ."

3. Service Delivery Context

The evaluation relied on the Child Welfare Information System (CWIS), Adoption Services records as well as the results of interviews with Adoption Services, CFSA staff and Alberta's Privacy Commissioner to analyze the context for the delivery and operation of the Adoption Web Page and address the following questions:

1) What are the characteristics, presenting issues and needs of the children profiled on the Web Page?

2) What are the characteristics of the parents recruited through the Web Page? How are these parents different from parents recruited through other mechanisms?

3) How does the Ministry maintain the Web Page and protect the privacy of children?

Children Profiled on the Web Page

According to CWIS data and Adoption Services records, 134 children were profiled on the Adoption Web Page between February of 2003 and February of 2004. The table below shows the breakdown of these children, by referring region.

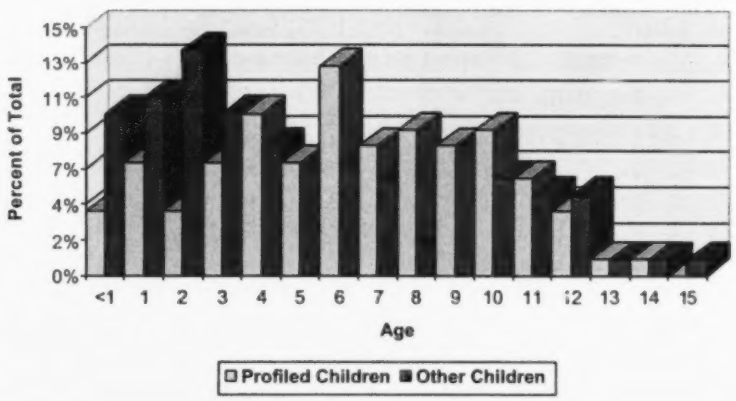
Region	Number of Children	%
1	3	2
3	47	35
4	11	9
5	3	2
6	63	47
7	4	3
8	3	2
Total	134	100%

Demographic data for the profiled children was compared to the demographic data derived from a random sample of 134 other children referred for adoption over the last two years.

Most of the children profiled in both groups were boys. Males accounted for 58% of the children who appeared on the Web Page and 60% of the other children referred for adoption over the last two years.

Aggregate information obtained from CWIS revealed that the ages of the children profiled on the Adoption Web Page between February of 2003 and February of 2004 ranged from a few months to fourteen years with the average age being 6.3 years. Meanwhile, the ages of the other 134 children sampled ranged from a few months to fifteen years, with an average age of 5.1. Nearly two-thirds (62%) of profiled children were between the ages of 4 and 10 as compared to 44% of the other children (see figure 1).

Figure 1: Age of Children When Profiled



As the table below illustrates, children profiled on the Web Page are more likely to me Caucasian and less likely to be Aboriginal than their non-profiled counterparts.

Ethnicity	Children Profiled on the Web Page (N=134)	Other Children (N=134)
Caucasian	66%	50%
Aboriginal	17%	28%
East Indian	1%	-
Mixed Race	8%	6%
Oriental	-	3%
Negroid	-	4%
Unknown	8%	9%

When the two groups of children were compared with respect to special needs or other factors that may inhibit adoptability, prenatal exposure to drugs and alcohol was found to be the most common presenting issue in each group. Children profiled were more likely to have one or more siblings and were twice as likely to have parents with a psychiatric history than the other children sampled (see table below).

Special Needs and Factors Inhibiting Adoption	Children Profiled on the Web Page (N=134)	Other Children (N=134)
Developmental delay (ADD)	36%	27%
Severe medical condition	10%	8%
Prenatal exposure to alcohol/drugs	66%	67%
Severe abuse or neglect	43%	40%
Exhibit severe behaviour	39%	25%
Parents with psychiatric history	51%	27%
Have one or more siblings	63%	42%
Over the age of 6 (at time of study)	49%	40%
Five or more placements	34%	26%

The perceptions of Adoption Services and CFSA staff closely reflected the findings illustrated above. When asked about the characteristics of the children profiled, staff concurred that exposure to alcohol and drug abuse and the presence of siblings were among the most common presenting issues. The other commonly recorded observation of staff was the tendency for children profiled on the Web Page to be afflicted by emotional or behavioural difficulties due to traumatic life experiences.

Given these presenting needs and factors, CFSA and Adoption Services staff indicated that optimal families for profiled children would have knowledge of issues such as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, and have the willingness to advocate on behalf of their children. Several respondents felt that parents with experience in caring for children with special needs had a strong advantage when matched with children like those profiled on the Ministry Web Page.

Parents Recruited through the Web Page

CWIS data and Adoption Services records provided demographic information on parents who were recruited, or submitted applications, through the Web Page between February 2003 and February 2004. This information was compared to the demographic data obtained for a random sample of fifty approved parents recruited through other mechanisms. Relative to other parents, those recruited through the Web Page tended to be slightly more educated and more likely to reside in smaller communities. The ages and ethnicities of the two groups were generally consistent (see table below).

	Parents Recruited through the Web Page (N=211)*	Other Parents (N=50)
Education Level		
University Degree	25%	20%
Post-Secondary Vocational	14%	20%
Community College	18%	18%
High School Graduation	24%	16%
Junior High Graduation	2%	16%
Unknown	17%	10%
Age		
20-24	1%	0%
25-29	9%	15%
30-34	26%	17%
35-39	27%	31%
40-44	19%	15%
45-49	10%	12%
50-54	2%	8%
55-59	4%	2%
Unknown	2%	0
Size of Community of Residence		
100,000 and over	42%	58%
10,000 – 99,000	17%	26%
1,000 – 9,000	34%	10%
999 and under	7%	6%
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	81%	84%
Aboriginal	2%	2%
East Indian	1%	2%
Mixed Race	1%	2%
Oriental	2%	0
Negroid	1%	0
Unknown	12%	10%
* Number includes both spouses of parental dyad		

When asked to describe the adoptive parents recruited through the Web Page, Adoption Services and CFSA staff indicated that they were often married couples who have either raised their own children, or fostered or adopted children in the past. Staff also felt that parents responding to the Web Page were usually highly informed about, and committed to, the adoption process and tended to be specific and persistent in their preferences and requests for available children. Yet beyond these generalities, the responses obtained from Ministry staff suggested that there was a high level of diversity and heterogeneity among these parents – including for example, single and first-time parents as well as parents from diverse occupational backgrounds and income levels.

Privacy and Content

Several Adoption Services and CFSA staff interviewed for the evaluation noted that the accessibility of the Web Page demands that the Ministry exercise extreme caution around the development of the profiles, particularly with respect to the amount and kind of information included. When developing the profiles – which do not contain any identifying information other than the first name and age of the child – the objective of the CFSAs and Adoption Services is to find a balance between the need to protect the privacy of the children and the need to provide adoptive parents with adequate information about needs.

Background documentation on the development of the Web Page indicated that the Ministry requested that the Ministry's Freedom of Information and Privacy (FOIP) Office complete a Privacy Impact Statement on the Web Page in November 2002. Upon reviewing the proposed content of the Web Page, the FOIP Office concluded that the information contained in the profiles was similar to the information provided through other media recruitment mechanism and therefore deemed that a full assessment was not required.

However, immediately following the launch, the province's Information and Privacy Commissioner expressed some concerns about the content of the Web Page. Specifically, the Commissioner felt that the profiles of the children on the Web Page contained more personal information than was necessary. In response to this concern, Adoption Services took the following actions:

- The revision of all profiles to exclude diagnostic labels and medical information.
- The revision of the scripts for the video clips to better coincide with the written profile information.
- The clarification of provincial protocols used for adoption media recruitment (CFSAs are now required to confirm in writing that the child and he child's caregiver are aware that adoption is the permanency plan and that the Internet will be used to recruit an adoptive family. The child (if old enough) and the caregiver must express their understanding that Internet exposure is a publicly accessible form of recruitment and may result in further exposure to other forms of public media, such as television, radio and newspapers).
- The requirement that CFSAs provide consent for each child featured on the Web Page.
- The confirmation by Adoption Program Staff, upon receipt of a new referral for the Web Page, that consent has been obtained and that appropriate notification has occurred.
- The requirement that all new profiles of children are forwarded to the FOIP Office for review and approval.

When interviewed for the evaluation, the Privacy Commissioner indicated that, despite initial concerns about the nature of the information contained in the child profiles immediately following the launch of the Web Page, the Ministry addressed the concerns in an appropriate and timely manner:

> **"I had a positive impression. We worked on it immediately with the public body…and the response was immediate. We were able to address a lot of issues right away – so the response was very proactive. They responded very appropriately once we raised our concerns with them."**

Staff from Adoption Services acknowledged that the actions taken in response to the Privacy Commissioner's comments enabled the Ministry to strengthen the administrative infrastructure of the Web Page, and formalize many of the process components listed in Section One of this report.

Several sources in the relevant literature confirm the appropriateness of the protocols utilized by Adoption Services during the development of profiles. For example, the report on photo-profiling issued by the Child Welfare League of America in 2003 cautioned about the use of "subjective" profile content that relates to the strengths, problems, dsabilities, and needs of a child (as opposed to objective information such as age and gender). The report recommended that:

- Subjective information be assessed to ensure accuracy, currency and reliability before it becomes part of a public profile;
- The writer of the profile have the opportunity to meet with the child;
- Someone who knows the child review the profile; and
- The child be involved in the creation of the profile to the extent possible (Gerstenzang & Freundlich, 2003).

Other commentators, including Cousins (2003), have called for individuals responsible for the development of profiles to consider three content-related questions:

1) Is the description sensitive and discreet without being bland?
2) What does the child want to say about her/himself?
3) What will the child or their birth parents feel when they see it, perhaps much later?

4. Effectiveness of the Web Page

The primary focus of the evaluation was the effectiveness of the Adoption Web Page, as expressed by the following research questions:

1) To what extent have the goals and the immediate, intermediate and long-term outcomes of the Web Page been achieved?
2) How do children feel about being profiled on the Web Page?
3) How can the effectiveness of the Web Page be improved?
4) What other mechanisms can be used to achieve the goals of the Web Page?

Data sources accessed to assemble information on effectiveness included Child Welfare Information System (CWIS), the relevant literature, Adoption Services records as well as the results of interviews with Adoption Services and CFSA staff and adoption experts. The target populations – adoptive parents and profiled children – were also sampled and surveyed on issues pertaining to the effectiveness of the Web Page.

Goals and Outcomes

Immediate Outcomes

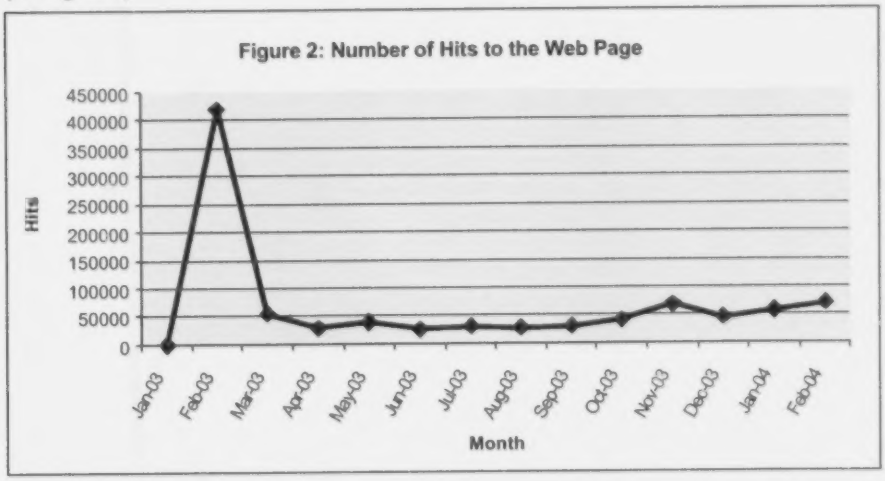
The evaluation identified and assessed the following short-term or immediate level outcomes for the Web Page:

1) The public is aware of the Adoption Program, the Web Page, and the need for adoptive parents.
2) The public is interested in the Adoption Program and the children profiled on the Web Page.
3) Adoptive parents are satisfied with, and informed by, the content of the Web Page.

Outcome #1 – Public Awareness

The number of 'hits' to the Web Page was used as the indicator for the outcome of 'public awareness.' Data obtained from the Children's Services webmaster (IBM) revealed that the number of hits peaked at over 418,000 in February of 2003 immediately following the launch of the Web Page and declined to approximately 56,000 in March and 30,000 in April of 2003. After February of 2003, the number of hits ranged from over 26,000 in June of 2003 to nearly 71,000 in February of 2004. The overall average number of hits for the period extending from February 2003 through February 2004 was 72,863, while the average for the twelve-month period of March-2003 to February 2004 period was 44,060 (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of Hits to the Web Page



Other data sources – particularly the survey of parents – suggested that the Web Page was effective at generating multiple facets of public awareness with respect to the Ministry's program, and adoption in general.

Outcome #2: Public Interest

To gauge the level of public interest in the Adoption Program and the children profiled on the Web Page, two indicators were utilized:

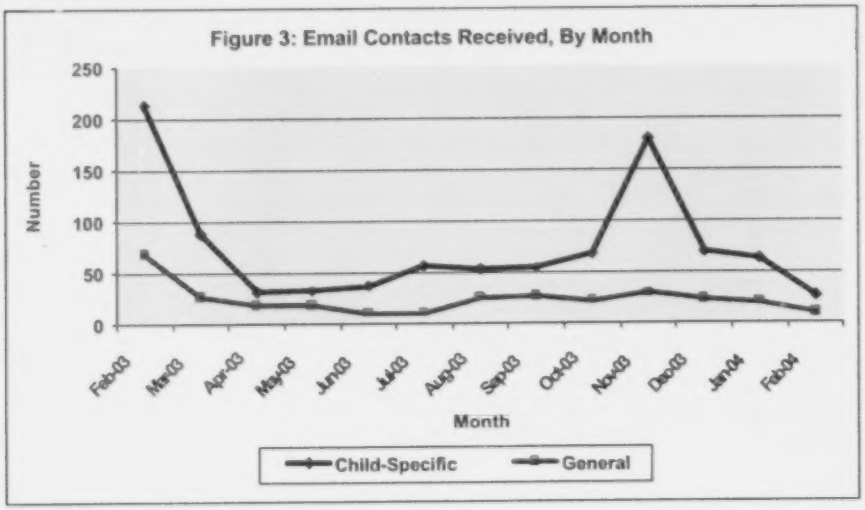
- Number of contacts (emails) received involving requests for information on the Adoption Program

- Number of contacts (emails) received involving requests for additional information on specific children profiled on the Web Page

Records maintained by Adoption Services during the twelve-month period following the launch revealed that the Ministry received 307 email messages requesting general information on adoption, and 978 emails messages requesting information on specific children profiled on the Web Page - an average of over seven enquires for every child profiled during the evaluation period.

Trend information derived from monthly totals shows that both general and child-specific enquiries "spiked" immediately following the launch of the Web Page but stabilized by April of 2003 – with the notable exception of November[1] when 180 child-specific information requests were fielded by Adoption Services (see figure 3).

Figure 3: Email Contacts Received, By Month



It should be noted that the most effective way to demonstrate the effect that the Web Page had on the level of public interest in the Program would have involved a comparison of the number of contacts received both before and after the launch. However, pre-launch contact information was not accessible for the evaluation.

Outcome #3: Parent Satisfaction

The evaluators interviewed a random sample of adoptive parents to determine the extent to which they were satisfied with, and informed by, the Adoption Web Page. Survey data revealed that parents were highly satisfied with the Web Page – in terms of both the structure and the content. Nearly all of the parents reported that the Web Page was easy or very easy to find and found it easy or very easy to navigate. Similarly, a large proportion of adoptive parents said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the layout and organization of the Web Page. The structural element of the Web Page that respondents most often cited as the most helpful was the search feature.

Most of the parents surveyed found the content of the Web Page to be easy or very easy to understand, and a large majority of respondents rated both the quantity and quality of information presented as either good or excellent. Most parents also said that they had found what they were been looking for on the Web Page. Those that did not were usually looking for somewhat more detailed information on the needs of the children profiled.

[1] November is recognized as Adoption Month.

Over three-quarters of the interviewees indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the content of the page.

Nearly all parents interviewed indicated that they would recommend the site to other adoptive parents – and approximately one-third of respondents stated that they had already done so. The response of several parents provided strong testimonials for the Web Page. One parent offered the following perspective:

> **"I thought the Web Page was absolutely wonderful. I thought it was very informative and it definitely helped our decision to adopt and to learn a lot about the children that are out there, and even the need for foster care. I found that it really helped."**

Others noted that the Web Page constitutes an effective medium for allowing prospective parents to "see what's out there" and "get to know adoption and be comfortable with it." Ninety-one percent of the parents interviewed rated the page as good or excellent overall.

Intermediate Outcomes

The evaluation sought to measure four intermediate level outcomes of the Web Page, including:

1) Adoptive parents recruited through the Web Page apply to adopt children in care.
2) CFSA staff approve adoptive parents recruited through the Web Page.
3) Adoption Services and CFSA staff match and place adoptive parents recruited through the Web Page with children eligible for adoption.
4) CFSA staff match and place children profiled on the Web Page with adoptive parents.

Outcome #1: Parent Recruitment (Applications)

The indicators for parents recruited through the Web Page who applied to adopt children in care consisted of:

- Number of applications that were received and screened in the twelve-month periods before and after the advent of the Web Page
- Number of applications from parents recruited directly through the Web Page that are received and screened

CWIS data and Adoption Services records revealed that the total number of applications received and screened by Adoption Services increased from 410 before the launch of the Web Page to 669 in the period after the launch – an increase of 63%.

Of the number of applications received after the launch, 111 applications – or 17% of all applications received and screened by the Program – were received from parents who had been recruited to adopt as a direct result of viewing the Web Page.

Outcome #2: Parent Approvals

The indicators for the number of parents recruited through the Web Page who are trained, undergo home assessments and are ultimately approved for adoption consisted of:

- Number of applications that are approved
- Number of applications from parents recruited through the Web Page that are approved

According to CWIS and Adoption Services records, the number of adoptive parents approved rose by 29% from 101 in 2002-2003 to 130 in 2004-2004.

Of the number of parents approved for adoption between February 2003 and February 2004, 22 – or 20% - were recruited through the Web Page.

Outcome #3: Parent Matches and Placements

The indicators for parents recruited through the Web Page who were matched and placed with children in care eligible for adoption were:

- Number of parents in 'View to Adopt' (VTA) status in the twelve-month periods before and after the advent of the Web Page
- Number of VTA's involving parents recruited through the Web Page

CWIS data showed that the total number of parents in VTA status increased from 169 before the launch of the Web Page to 228 in the period after the launch – an increase of 35%. Of the 228 parents in VTA status between February 2003 and February 2004, 79 applied within this twelve-month period.

Of the number of parents in VTA status within 12 months of the launch, 8 (4% of the total number and 10% of the 'same year' applicants) were recruited through the Web Page.

It should be noted that VTA status is one of the final stages of the adoption process. The number of parents that were in VTA status and were recruited through the Web Page may reflect the brief period of time that Adoption Services had to match these parents with adoptive children.

Outcome #4: Child Matches and Placements

Two indicators were selected for the outcome involving the matching and placement of children profiled on the Web Page with adoptive parents. These were:

- Number of children in 'View to Adopt' (VTA) status in the twelve-month periods before and after the advent of the Web Page
- Number of VTA's involving children profiled on the Web Page

According to CWIS data, the total number of children in VTA status increased by 30% after the launch of the Web Page – from 212 in the period extending from February 2002 to February 2003 to 277 in the period extending from February 2003 to February 2004 (the number of children in Permanent Guardianship Order status increased by approximately 8% over the same period, indicating that the increase in the total number of children in VTA status was not attributable to an increase in the number of children in Permanent Guardianship Order status).

Of the 134 children profiled on the Web Page between February of 2003 and February of 2004, 56 (42%) were matched with adoptive parents and 39 (29%) obtained VTA status during the twelve-month period. Profiled children in VTA status accounted for 14% of all children obtaining VTA status between February 2003 and February 2004.

Long Term Outcomes

The long-term outcomes examined during the evaluation included:

1) CFSA staff finalizes adoptions involving
   - Adoptive parents recruited through the Web Page
   - Children profiled on the Web Page
   - Children in permanent care

2) CFSA staff uses adoption as a permanency planning option for children in care

3) Children eligible for adoption spend less time in care

Outcome #1: Finalized Adoptions

The indicators for the finalization of adoptions involving parents recruited through the Web Page, children profiled on the Web Page, and children in permanent care were:

- Number of adoption orders issued involving parents recruited through the Web Page
- Number of adoption orders issued for children profiled on the Web Page
- Number of adoption orders issued for children in permanent care

Data obtained from CWIS indicated that the number of adoption orders issued for children in permanent care decreased by 8% after the launch of the Web Page – from 201 in the period extending from February 2002 to February 2003 to 185 in the period extending from February 2003 to February 2004. Only 1 adoption order issued after February of 2003 involved a parent recruited through the Web Page and 6 orders involved children profiled on the Web Page.

Adoption Services staff indicated that the decrease in adoption orders was due to the increased emphasis on recruitment and placement of children in adoptive homes. Adoptions are finalized following a period of adjustment, and the completion of court documents. This process takes approximately 12 months.

Outcome #2: Permanency Planning

Two indicators were used for the outcome relating to the use of adoption as a permanency planning option:

- Number of children referred to Adoption Services for matching
- Number of foster parents who adopted foster children
- Number of children profiled on the Web Page who were adopted by foster parents

According to CWIS data, the number of children referred to Adoption Services by the CFSAs for matching increased by 4.3% between the February 2002-February 2003 and February 2003-February 2004 periods from 186 to 194.

The number of foster parent adoptions increased by 6% over the same period, from 111 between February 2002 and February 2003 to 118 between February 2003 and February 2004. Only two children profiled on the Web Page entered VTA status with their foster parents between the date of the launch and February of 2004.

Outcome #3: Time in Care

The indicators for the outcomes associated with time spent in permanent care were:

- Average length of time children with permanency plans of adoption spend in permanent care
- Average length of time children profiled on the Web Page spend in permanent care (from the time their profiles appear on the Web Page)

CWIS data did not permit the calculation of these averages. While it was not possible to report on this outcome for the evaluation, this information will be collected in the future.

Children's Perceptions

The evaluators interviewed a random sample of children age seven and over who appeared on the Adoption Web Page to assess their experiences with the Ministry's photo-profiling process. Survey data revealed that nearly all of the 12 children interviewed held positive opinions about being on the Internet. Nearly all of the children reported that they felt happy or good being on the Web Page, and were hopeful that their photo-profiles would allow them to be placed with adoptive families sooner. One child respondent admitted to feeling "happy and excited because I never was on the computer before."

Only two children expressed mixed feelings about the Web Page. One child thought that only parents who were going to adopt children should see the photo-profiles. The other child thought that it was positive that adoptive parents would see his profile, but was not comfortable with the idea that other children at school might see the profile. None of the children interviewed indicated that anyone aside from their foster or adoptive parents had ever commented on or mentioned their photo-profiles. Other points that emerged from the interviews with children include:

- Most of the children that participated in the survey said that they had visited or been shown the Web Page and saw their photos and descriptions – and all of the children who said that they had seen their photo-profiles also said that their foster or adoptive parents had shown it to them for the first time.
- Most of the children remembered having the purpose of the Web Page explained to them by their adoption worker, their foster parents or both.
- Less that half of the children remembered being asked if they wanted to be on the Web Page, and only a few said they were given a chance to (a) look at the photos and descriptions of other children beforehand, or (b) help to write or suggest content for their own photo-profiles.

With the exception of one child, all of the children who participated in the interviews indicated that they understood why their photos and descriptions were on the Internet. Several said they knew that the Web Page was a means to become adopted. One little boy stated that, "[the Internet] is the fastest way to be adopted and I always wanted to (be adopted)." All of the children interviewed believed that putting their photo-profiles on the Web Page was a good idea.

When the children were asked what they liked about their profiles, most of them commented on the content rather than the photos or videos. One child liked the fact that the descriptions "told people about me" and another observed that the text "told true stuff and that I like to go camping and swimming." None of the children interviewed said that they did not like their photo-profiles – or that there was some aspect of their photo-profiles that they did not like. In fact, several children indicated that they thought they looked "good" or "cool" on the Web Page. One child explained the sensation as, "a great wave of feeling famous."

Suggestions for Improvement

The survey instruments designed for the evaluation invited adoption experts, adoptive parents and Adoption Services and CFSA staff to offer suggestions on how the Ministry could improve the effectiveness of the Web Page. The theme that emerged most frequently in the responses of all three groups concerned the level of detail in the descriptions. Nearly half of the parents surveyed felt that additional information on the special needs of children would be helpful. Expert respondents concurred that the profiles should contain some objective information on medical diagnoses. Even Ministry staff acknowledged that the current level of detail may not be sufficient to provide prospective parents with "the full picture" of the issues presented by the profiled children. Some staff expressed the concern that withholding some types of information or using ambiguous terminology to describe special needs or conditions may leave adoptive parents who obtain additional detail feeling "tricked" by the Web Page. A few individuals suggested that the Program explore options for providing approved parents with online access to supplementary information on specific children through password-protected links.

In addition to information about special needs and presenting issues, a large number of interviewees thought the Web Page should include more information about the parental capacities – in terms of skill and temperament - best suited to each child. Several experts and staff also thought that an improvement to the Web Page would be an introductory page highlighting the reasons why the profiled children are in care and describing some of the more typical issues or conditions presented (for example, exposure to alcohol and drug abuse).

Another often-cited suggestion involved the removal of the photo-profiles of children who were already matched with adoptive parents. Several parents referred to the disappointment they experienced upon learning that featured children were already matched with other parents. A CFSA representative interviewed for the evaluation suggested the use of a symbol to designate children who had already been matched.

Interview results also revealed a consensus around improving the Web Page by simplifying or streamlining some of the content. Several respondents, particularly among the expert group, felt that the Web Page was "busy" and that many of the links could be minimized with the use of drop lists. A few staff concurred that the Web Page could be adjusted to become more "user-friendly."

Other suggestions offered included:

- Ensuring that the Web Page features recent photos
- Adding a glossary of terms and acronyms
- Increasing the number of photo-profiles
- Sharing success stories about successful parent-child matches facilitated by the Web Page
- Increasing the use of video clips

5. Impact of the Web Page

The results of the interviews with Adoption Services, CFSA staff and local, national and international adoption experts were used to address the following questions:

1) *What impact does the Web Page have on the Ministry's adoption process and adoptions across the province?*

2) *What are the unintended or unanticipated impacts of the Web Page?*

Impact on Ministry Adoptions

Nearly all Ministry staff surveyed identified the magnitude of the response to the Web Page from adoptive parents as the most obvious impact of the Web Page. Most CFSA and Adoption Services staff referred to the dramatic increases in the numbers of general enquiries, specific information requests, applications and home assessments that have emerged since the launch. Some interviewees expressed the belief that the Web Page has effectively transformed the nature of the Ministry's adoption and permanency planning processes. According to one person:

> **"The impact has been tremendous. It's changed the way we do adoption in Alberta entirely. [The Web Page] drives the adoption process in Alberta and it has become the single most powerful tool that we've ever used."**

Another made the following comment:

> **"People are starting to put adoptions at the forefront. Now, (caseworkers) are considering adoption as a permanency plan for all of their kids."**

While survey participants strongly concurred that the immediate impact of the Web Page has exceeded expectations, most also acknowledged that the response overwhelmed the Program and created a new set of workload-related issues. The most notable issue pertained to the inability of some CFSAs to meet the sudden increase in the demand for home assessments. To accommodate this situation, Adoption Services contracted with several private agencies to complete home assessments on behalf of regional authorities. A representative from one region said:

> **"When this started, we didn't expect our workload to triple. There has been an explosion. We just didn't expect such a response - and it has been continuous."**

While the advent of the Web Page has had a major impact upon the Ministry's adoption process, it has also impacted private agency adoption processes and adoptions in general. Owing largely to the accessibility of the Web Page, staff have noticed appreciable increases in awareness and general interest in adoption throughout the province – including remote rural areas – and fielded large numbers of inquiries from adoptive parents in other provinces and countries. Several staff also speculated that the use of the Internet would, over time, help to communicate facts and dispel myths about adoption (such as the common belief that there are no children readily available for adoption).

Experts also commented on the impacts of Internet photo-profiling. Several survey participants expressed the view that, because this phenomenon has proven to be such an effective and highly efficient mechanism for disseminating the message that large numbers of children are in need of permanent homes, Web Pages like the one developed by Alberta Children's Services will become increasingly common. One expert acknowledged that such websites are an inevitable "wave of the future."

Unintended Results

When CFSA and Adoption Services staff were asked if any unanticipated or unintentional results accompanied the advent of the web page, all responded affirmatively, indicating that several noteworthy consequences had emerged. The public response to the Web Page – in terms of the level of interest in the Program and the profiled children – was

widely regarded as the most obvious positive result. However, the sheer enormity of the response was unanticipated, and has presented some new challenges as noted in the previous section. Some staff also felt that, in retrospect, the controversy that emerged immediately after the launch of the Web Page may have had the ironic effect of creating public awareness and curiosity, which was then manifested as public interest in the children profiled and the adoption process. Several other unexpected results were identified, including the following:

- Many sibling groups were adopted since the launch of the Web Page.
- Other provincial jurisdictions have approached Alberta for more information.
- Individuals who never would have been interested in adoption previously have requested information about profiled children and the Ministry's adoption process.
- Many adoptive parents modified their preferences and became more flexible in their searches.

Adoption experts were asked to describe the unintended results associated with using the Internet to recruit adoptive parents from a theoretical perspective. Many of their perspectives were consistent with the reflections of Ministry staff, including the view that websites with photo-listing features broaden the range of children that many adoptive parents will consider and effectively expand the potential pool of recruits. However, the responses of experts also referenced concerns relating to the Internet photo-profiling phenomenon, such as the potential for children to be harmed in the absence of a set of common guidelines for website and content development. A few also noted that the use of, and increasing reliance on, technologically advanced recruiting mechanisms (like the Internet) inadvertently exclude certain populations from the adoption process.

Conclusions

The conclusions in this section are based upon the evidence obtained during the evaluation and the results reported in the previous section. The conclusions are presented here in accordance with the five major domains of inquiry (the rationale, design, service delivery, effectiveness, and impact of the Web Page).

Rationale for the Web Page

1. **The need to increase the use of adoption as a permanency planning option for children in the permanent care of the Ministry served as the primary impetus for the conceptualization of the Adoption Web Page.**

Documented background information and feedback from Adoption Services staff indicated that the Ministry had extensive previous experience with the photo-listing of children through the Wednesday's Child television segments and understood the power of visual media with respect to the recruitment of adoptive parents. Vision and specific direction provided by the Minister of Children's Services contributed to the exploration of the feasibility of using the Internet as a recruitment instrument, and ultimately to the actual development of the Adoption Web Page.

2. **The use of the Internet is regarded as an effective parent recruitment strategy.**

Design of the Web Page

3. **Alberta's Web Page is comparable in content and structure to more established websites developed by North American adoption agencies and organizations.**

A comparative analysis of websites and the appraisals of a group of adoption experts asked to examine Alberta's Web Page suggested that the content of the photo-profiles on the Ministry Web Page are less detailed and descriptive than those featured on most other similar websites. However, the content tends to be more protective of personal information (such as medical diagnoses), more uniform and consistent in presentation, and portrays children in a more positive light. The Web Page also contains several unique and progressive features, including video clips of children, a downloadable application form, statistical summaries and a comprehensive set of links to information sources and resources.

4. **The Adoption Web Page reflects many of the "best practices" associated with the presentation of general adoption and child-specific content.**

According to the results of interviews involving experts in the field of adoption and the findings of a review of the relevant literature, the Adoption Web Page contains all of the general adoption information that adoptive parents would expect to obtain through a

photo-profiling website. However, experts felt that the descriptions of children on the Web Page could present additional detail on presenting issues and special needs without jeopardizing the privacy of children.

Service Delivery Context

5. Children profiled on the Adoption Web Page differ from other children available for adoption in some noteworthy ways.

Relative to their peers, children featured on the Web Page were slightly older, more likely to be from sibling groups, more likely to be Caucasian, and more likely to have natural parents who have a history of psychiatric illness. The most common issue presented by children profiled on the Adoption Web Page and other children available for adoption was prenatal exposure to drugs and/or alcohol.

6. Parents recruited through the Adoption Web Page are more likely to reside in smaller communities than other adoptive parents.

Relative to other adoptive parents, parents recruited as a result of the Web Page were less likely to live in the major urban centres of the province and tended to be more educated. The two groups were generally similar with respect to age and ethnicity.

7. The Ministry adheres to appropriate protocols in developing and managing the child-specific descriptions featured on the Adoption Web Page.

Interviews with CFSA and Adoption Service staff revealed that the Ministry took several significant steps to ensure that the protection of the privacy of the children profiled on the Web Page. The protocols in use, including the provision of written confirmation that the child and the child's caregiver know that adoption is the permanency plan and that the Internet will be used to recruit an adoptive family, were viewed as effective strategies for preventing the release of information that might prove to be harmful or damaging to children.

8. The Government's Information and Privacy Commissioner does not have any concerns about the current content of the Adoption Web Page.

Effectiveness of the Web Page

9. The measurable goals and outcomes of the Adoption Web Page were achieved.

Administrative data analyzed for the evaluation revealed that the Adoption Web Page was very effective at generating public awareness of the need for adoptive parents as well as public interest in the Ministry's adoption program and the individual children profiled on the Web Page. The Web Page also contributed to increases in the number of adoptive parents recruited, approved and matched with children by Adoption Services. Even longer-term outcomes, such as finalized adoptions and the increased use of adoption as a permanency planning option as indicated by the number of children referred from the

CFSAs improved since the advent of the Web Page. The only outcome indicator that decreased in the first year of the Web Page was the total number of adoption orders issued for children in permanent care.

10. Children generally had positive opinions about being profiled on the Adoption Web Page.

All of the children interviewed for the evaluation said that having their pictures and descriptions on the Internet was a good idea. Nearly all of the children said that they felt good or happy about being on the Web Page and that they understood the why their photo-profiles were on the Internet. None of the child respondents had any concerns about their photo-profiles or about how their profiles portrayed them. However, a few of the children said that they were not showed the profiles of other children beforehand or invited to participate in the development of their own profiles.

11. Adoptive parents generally had positive opinions of the Adoption Web Page.

The majority of parents interviewed for the evaluation were very satisfied with the structure and content of the Web Page. Most found the Web Page to be 'easy' or 'very easy' to locate and navigate and were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the content and structure of the Web Page. Nearly all parent respondents rated the Web Page as 'good' or 'excellent' overall and indicated that they would recommend the site to other prospective adoptive parents.

12. The Adoption Web Page could be improved by adding some additional detail about individual children.

The results of the interviews with adoption experts, parents and Ministry staff revealed a strong consensus around a central theme: the Web Page could be enhanced with supplemental information pertaining to the presenting issues and special needs of featured children. Respondents felt that the Ministry could explore options for making this information available to adoptive parents without compromising the privacy of the children profiled.

Impact of the Web Page

13. The Adoption Web Page has had a dramatic and positive impact on the Ministry's adoption process.

According to CFSA and Adoption Services staff, the most apparent impact of the Adoption Web Page related to the expansion of the profile of the Ministry's adoption program – with respect to both the level of public awareness of the program and the level of salience that the program achieved with case workers seeking permanency planning options for children in care. Interviewees also reported that the advent of the Web Page led to a dramatic increase in the number of child-specific information requests, screenings and applications, and home assessments.

Recommendations

The major conclusions of the evaluation identified in Section 4 and the results described in Section 3 informed the recommendations presented below. The recommendations are listed in descending order of relative strength and priority in two major areas:

1) The structural configuration, or design, of the Web Page
2) The management of the Web Page

Design

1. **Develop a secure, password-protected section of the Web Page that will provide approved parents with access to additional child-specific information.**

A design solution that would enable the Ministry to balance the need to protect the privacy of featured children with the desire of parents to obtain additional detail would entail the development of a secondary 'zone' of information, accessible only to parents approved by Adoption Services.

2. **Expand the search function of the Web Page to enable viewers to initiate more precise search exercises.**

The addition of "look-up categories" on the Web Page to include options such as ethnicity, for example, would enable viewers to identify children that meet specific search criteria more efficiently.

3. **Add a glossary of key terms or acronyms to the Web Page.**

A link that contains definitions will help to ensure that viewers understand the terminology used in the photo-profiles of featured children.

Management

1. **Ensure that children who will be featured on the Web Page are given the opportunity to participate in the development of their profiles.**

Encouraging children to assist with the development of content for their descriptions is regarded in the relevant literature as an import "process" step in child-specific recruitment. Ensuring that children are involved in this activity enables them to feel a sense of pride and ownership for their profiles, and may also result in the identification of information that will serve to strengthen descriptions.

2. **Remove or identify the profiles of matched children.**

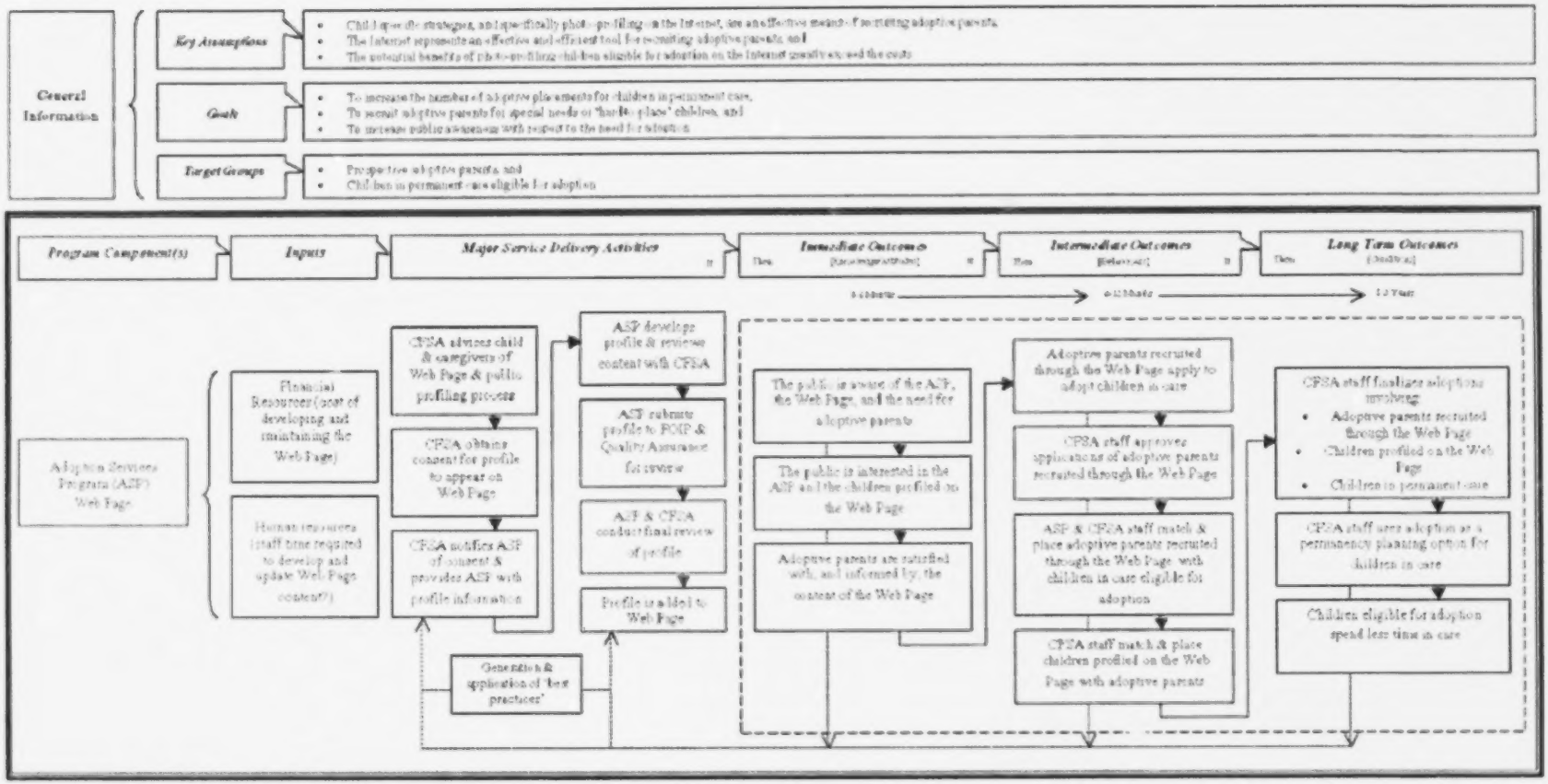
A large number of parents interviewed for the evaluation described the considerable disappointment they experienced upon enquiring about a featured child and learning that the child had already been matched. A simple means of avoiding this situation would be the addition of a small notation to the photo-profiles of matched children.

3. **Evaluate the Web Page periodically.**

The further development of the outcome measurement framework created for this evaluation and the refinement of some dimensions of administrative data collection would provide Adoption Services with a convenient mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the performance of the Web Page on an ongoing or regular basis.

Appendix A

Adoptions Web Page Evaluation Logic Model


General Information
Key Assumptions
Child-specific strategies, and specifically photo-profiling on the Internet, are an effective means of recruiting adoptive parents.
The Internet represents an effective and efficient tool for recruiting adoptive parents, and
The potential benefits of photo-profiling children eligible for adoption on the Internet greatly exceed the costs.
Goals
To increase the number of adoptive placements for children in permanent care,
To recruit adoptive parents for special needs or 'hard-to-place' children, and
To increase public awareness with respect to the need for adoption.
Target Groups
Prospective adoptive parents, and
Children in permanent care eligible for adoption.
Program Component(s)
Inputs
Major Service Delivery Activities
Immediate Outcomes
Intermediate Outcomes
Long Term Outcomes
Adoption Services Program (ASP) Web Page
Financial Resources (cost of developing and maintaining the Web Page)
Human resources (staff time required to develop and update Web Page content)
CFSA advises child & caregivers of Web Page & public profiling process
CFSA obtains consent for profile to appear on Web Page
CFSA notifies ASP of consent & provides ASP with profile information
ASP develops profile & reviews content with CFSA
ASP submits profile to POP & Quality Assurance for review
ASP & CFSA conduct final review of profile
Profile is added to Web Page
Generation & application of 'best practices'
The public is aware of the ASP, the Web Page, and the need for adoptive parents
The public is interested in the ASP and the children profiled on the Web Page
Adoptive parents are satisfied with, and informed by, the content of the Web Page
Adoptive parents recruited through the Web Page apply to adopt children in care
CFSA staff approves applications of adoptive parents recruited through the Web Page
ASP & CFSA staff match & place adoptive parents recruited through the Web Page with children in care eligible for adoption
CFSA staff match & place children profiled on the Web Page with adoptive parents
CFSA staff finalizes adoptions involving:
Adoptive parents recruited through the Web Page
Children profiled on the Web Page
Children in permanent care
CFSA staff uses adoption as a permanency planning option for children in care
Children eligible for adoption spend less time in care

Appendix B
Framework for Evaluating the Outcomes of the Adoptions Website

Outcome	Indicator	Data Source	Data Collection Method	Data Analysis Method
Immediate Outcomes				
The public is aware of the asp, the web page, and the need for adoptive parents	• Number of hits on the Web Page	• ACS Webmaster	• Administrative data review	• Post launch trend analysis of quantitative data
The public is interested in the ASP and the children profiled on the Web Page	• Number of contacts received involving requests for information on the Adoptions Services Program • Number of contacts received involving requests for additional information on specific children profiled on the Web Page	• ASP records • CFSA records	• Administrative data review	• Pre/post launch trend analyses of quantitative data • Post launch trend analysis of quantitative data
Adoptive parents are satisfied with, and informed by, the content of the Web Page	• Number/percentage of prospective adoptive parents indicating satisfaction with Web Page content • Number/percentage of prospective adoptive parents indicating that the Web Page contained sufficient information on the ASP and the children profiled	• Prospective adoptive parents	• Interviews	• Descriptive statistical analysis of quantitative data • Content analysis of qualitative data
Intermediate Outcomes				
Adoptive parents recruited through the Web Page apply to adopt children in care	• Number of applications that are received and screened (total) • Number of applications from parents recruited through the Web Page that are received and screened	• ASP records • CWIS	• Administrative data review	• Pre/post launch trend analysis of quantitative data • Post launch trend analysis of quantitative data
CFSA staff approves applications of adoptive parents recruited through the Web Page	• Number of applications that are approved (total) • Number of applications from parents recruited through the Web Page that are approved	• ASP records • CWIS	• Administrative data review	• Pre/post launch trend analysis of quantitative data • Post launch trend analysis of quantitative data
ASP & CFSA staff match & place adoptive parents recruited through the Web Page with children in care eligible for adoption	• Number of parents in 'View to Adopt' (VTA) status (total) • Number of VTA's involving parents recruited through the Web Page	• ASP records • CWIS	• Administrative data review	• Pre/post launch trend analysis of quantitative data • Post launch trend analysis of quantitative data
CFSA staff match and place children profiled on the Web Page with adoptive parents	• Number of children in 'View to Adopt' (VTA) status (total) • Number of VTA's involving children profiled on the Web Page	• ASP records • CWIS	• Administrative data review	• Pre/post launch trend analysis of quantitative data • Post launch trend analysis of quantitative data
Long Term Outcomes				
CFSA staff finalizes adoptions involving: • Adoptive parents recruited through the Web Page • Children profiled on the Web Page • Children in permanent care	• Number of adoption orders issued involving parents recruited through the web page • Number of adoption orders issued for children profiled on the web page • Number of adoption orders issued for children in permanent care (total)	• ASP records • CWIS	• Administrative data review	• Pre/post launch trend analysis of quantitative data • Post launch trend analysis of quantitative data
CFSA staff uses adoption as a permanency planning option for children in care	• Number of children referred to ASP for matching • Number of foster parents who adopted foster children • Number of children profiled on the Web Page who were adopted by foster parents	• ASP records	• Administrative data review	• Pre/post launch trend analysis of quantitative data
Children eligible for adoption spend less time in care	• Average length of time children eligible for adoption spend in permanent care • Average length of time children profiled on the Web Page spend in permanent care (from the time their profiles appear on the Web Page)	• ASP records • CWIS	• Administrative data review	• Pre/post launch trend analysis of quantitative data • Post launch trend analysis of quantitative data

Appendix C

INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT FOR ADOPTION EXPERTS

1) How does photo profiling on the Internet help to recruit parents?

2) What are the advantages of this approach to recruiting parents?

   a) What are the disadvantages?

3) What are the alternatives to using photo profiling on the Internet as a means of recruiting parents?

4) What impact does Internet-based photo profiling have on adoption, in general?

5) What are some of the unintended or unanticipated impacts of using the Internet to profile children eligible for adoption?

6) Are you familiar with the Alberta Photo Profile page?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

a) (If "yes") What would you say are the strengths and weaknesses of the Profile Page?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

b) Do you have any recommendations or suggestions on how the Ministry could improve the effectiveness of its Profile Page?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

(If "no", proceed to next question)

7) What recommendations or suggestions would you provide to jurisdictions planning to develop Internet-based photo-profile pages?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix C

INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT FOR CFSA STAFF

1) One of the goals of the Profile Page is to recruit adoptive parents for special needs children – or children that are difficult to place. How do you think the Profile Page helps the Ministry recruit parents that are suitable for these types of children?

2) We'd like to know a bit about the children from your region that have appeared on the Profile Page. Generally speaking, what are the characteristics of these children and what types of issues do they present?

   a) What are the needs of the children profiled on the Profile Page?

3) Have any adoptive parents in your region been recruited as a direct result of the Profile Page?

   ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

   a) (If "yes") Generally speaking, what are the characteristics of these parents?

   (If "no", proceed to next question)

4) Are parents recruited through the Profile Page any different from parents that are recruited through other mechanisms?

   ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

a) (If "yes") How are they different?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

(If no, proceed to next question)

5) As you know, there were some privacy concerns about the Profile Page when it was launched last year. How does Children's Services protect the Privacy of the children profiled on the Profile Page?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6) What impact has the Profile Page had on the adoption process in your region?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

7) Do you think that the Profile Page has produced any unintended or unanticipated results, either positive or negative?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

a) (If "yes") what results have been produced?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

(If no, proceed to next question)

8) Based on the inquiries you receive, do you think people's knowledge about the kinds of children available for adoption has changed since the launch of the Profile Page?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

a) (If "yes") How has their knowledge changed?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

(If no, proceed to next question)

9) Do you think their people's knowledge about adoption in general has changed since the launch of the Profile Page?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

a) (If "yes") How has their knowledge changed?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

(If no, proceed to next question)

10) Speaking from a regional perspective, do you have any suggestions about how the Ministry can improve the Profile Page?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

11) Do you think there is anything else the Ministry can or should be doing to recruit adoptive parents or increase the number of adoptive placements?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix C

INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT FOR ADOPTION SERVICES STAFF

1) The Profile Page is the first of its kind in Canada. Where did the idea come from, and how did Children's Services identify the need for the Profile Page?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2) One of the goals of the Profile Page is to recruit adoptive parents for special needs children – or children that are difficult to place. How do you think the Profile Page helps the Ministry recruit parents that are suitable for these types of children?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3) Generally speaking, what are the characteristics of the parents recruited through the Profile Page?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4) Are the parents recruited through the Profile Page any different from the parents recruited through other mechanisms?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

a) (If "yes") How are they different?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

(If no, proceed to next question)

5) We'd like to know a bit about the children that have appeared on the Profile Page. Generally speaking, what are the characteristics of these children and what types of issues do they present?

b) What are the needs of the children profiled on the Profile Page?

6) As you know, there were some privacy concerns about the Profile Page when it was launched last year. How does Children's Services protect the privacy of the children profiled on the Profile Page?

7) What impact has the Profile Page had on the ministry's adoption process?

8) What impact has the Profile Page had on adoptions across the province?

9) Do you think that the Profile Page has produced any unintended or unanticipated results, either positive or negative?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

a) (If "yes") what results have been produced?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

(If no, proceed to next question)

10) Based on the inquiries you receive, do you think people's knowledge about the kinds of children available for adoption has changed since the launch of the Profile Page?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

a) (If "yes") How has their knowledge changed?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

(If no, proceed to next question)

11) Do you think people's knowledge about adoption in general has changed since the launch of the Profile Page?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

a) (If "yes") How has their knowledge changed?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

(If no, proceed to next question)

12) Do you have any suggestions about how the ministry can improve the Profile Page?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

13) Do you think there is anything else the ministry can or should be doing to recruit adoptive parents or increase the number of adoptive placements?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix C

INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT FOR THE PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

1) As you know, the launch of the Profile Page in February of 2003 created some controversy. What were your immediate thoughts about the Profile Page?

2) Following your review of the Profile Page last February, you asked the ministry to change or revise the Profile Page. What, specifically, were the nature of the changes or revisions that you requested?

3) Were you satisfied with the manner in which the ministry implemented the changes that you requested?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

a) (If "no") Why not?

4) If a parent asked you how the ministry protects the privacy of the children profiled on the Profile Page, how would you respond?

5) What is your opinion of the current content of the Profile Page?

6) Is there anything else about the content or processes supporting the Profile Page that you would like to see the ministry change?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix C

INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT FOR PARENTS

Introductory Questions

1) Are you aware of the Adoptions Profile Page?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If no:
Thank you for participating.

If yes:
How did you find out about the Adoptions Profile Page?
<list of potential options here>

- ☐ The media
- ☐ Adoption Services Worker
- ☐ ACS website
- ☐ Recommendation from a friend or family member
- ☐ Other

2) Have you visited the Profile Page?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If no:
Why not?

_____
_____
_____
_____

If yes:
What was your main reason for visiting the Profile Page?
<list of potential options here>

- ☐ Curiosity
- ☐ Interest in learning more about the adoption process
- ☐ Interest in seeing what children were/are available
- ☐ Interest in a specific child

3) Where did you access the Profile Page?

- ☐ Home
- ☐ Public library
- ☐ Regional office
- ☐ Other_____

Structure/Format Questions

4) How easy was it for you to find the Profile Page?
- ☐ Very easy
- ☐ Easy
- ☐ Average
- ☐ Difficult
- ☐ Very difficult

5) How easy was it for you to navigate the Profile Page?
- ☐ Very easy
- ☐ Easy
- ☐ Average
- ☐ Difficult
- ☐ Very difficult

6) How satisfied were you with the way the Profile Page was organized?
- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

7) Do you have any suggestions for how the ministry could improve the structure or layout of the Profile Page?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix C

Content Questions

8) How easy was it to for you to understand the content of the Profile Page?
- ☐ Very easy
- ☐ Easy
- ☐ Average
- ☐ Difficult
- ☐ Very difficult

9) Overall, how satisfied were you with the content of the Profile Page?
- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

10) Did you find the information you were looking for on the Profile Page?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If no:
What information were you unable to find?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

11) How would you rate the quantity of information on the Profile Page?
- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

12) How would you rate the quality of information on the Profile Page?
- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

13) What content did you find most helpful?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

14) Do you have any suggestions for how the ministry could improve the content of the Profile Page?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Closing Questions

15) Would you recommend the Profile Page to others?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Why or why not?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

16) Overall, how would you rate the Profile Page?

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

17) What did you like about the Profile Page?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

18) Do you have any other suggestions for how the ministry can improve the Profile Page?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix C

INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT FOR CHILDREN (Age 7 & up)

1) How did you find out about the website? [All children]

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2) Who showed you the website for the first time? [All children]

_____

3) Did anyone explain the website to you? [All children]

☐ Yes
☐ No

[If yes] Who explained it to you? [All children]

_____

4) Did you have a chance to look at the website and see the profiles? [All children]

☐ Yes
☐ No

[If yes] What did you think of the profiles? [Older children only]

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5) Did anyone ask you if you would like to have your profile on the website?

☐ Yes
☐ No

[If yes] Who asked you? [All children]

_____

6) Did you help to write or suggest things for your profile? [All children]
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

7) Did you see your profile on the website? [All children]
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

   [If yes] What did you think of your profile when you saw it? [All children]

   How did you feel when you saw it? [Older children only]

8) What do you like about your profile? [All children]

9) Was (Is) there anything you didn't (don't) like about your profile? [All children]
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

   [If yes] What didn't (don't) you like about your profile? [All children]

Do you understand why your profile was/is on the website? [All children]

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

10) How do you feel about being on the website? [All children]
What do you like about being on the website? [Older children only] Is there anything you don't like about being on the website? [Older children only]

_____
_____
_____
_____

11) Did anyone tell you they saw your profile on the website? [Older children only]

☐ Yes
☐ No

[If yes] Who? [Response options not read aloud]

☐ a friend
☐ my birth family
☐ a neighbour
☐ a kid at school
☐ a teacher/coach
☐ other_____

How did you feel when they said they saw your profile?

_____
_____
_____
_____

12) Do you think putting your profile on the website was a good idea? [Older children only]

☐ Yes
☐ No

[If yes] Why?
[If no] Why not?

_____

Appendix D

References

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